

**Motion on “Safeguarding freedom of information,  
of the press and of the Internet” at the  
Legislative Council Meeting of 5 June 2013**

**Progress Report**

At the Legislative Council meeting of 5 June 2013, the following motion was passed:

“That, as the free flow of information is an important cornerstone of Hong Kong’s economic and social development, this Council urges the Government to safeguard freedom of information, freedom of the press and freedom of the Internet, so as to uphold the core values cherished by the public and Hong Kong’s economic development advantages.”

2. This reports briefs Members on the latest position.
  
3. The Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (“HKSAR”) Government has been making information available to the public, either routinely or in response to request, in accordance with the Code on Access to Information (“the Code”). Since the introduction of the Code in 1995, of the 33 082 requests which covered information held by bureaux/departments and which the bureaux/departments have responded to, 32 303 requests (97.6%) have been met either in full (31 574 requests) or in part (729 requests).
  
4. The Law Reform Commission has established two sub-committees to consider the topics of “access to information” and “archives law” respectively. The two sub-committees will conduct a detailed review of the current situation in respect of the topics under their respective purview, as well as a comprehensive comparative study of the relevant laws in overseas

jurisdictions, with a view to making appropriate recommendations on possible options for reform if need be and as appropriate. Such work has already commenced.

5. The HKSAR Government is rendering full co-operation in connection with the above studies, and will consider how the prevailing arrangements could be further improved having regard to the findings of the relevant studies.

6. Freedom of the press and freedom of speech are Hong Kong's core values. The HKSAR Government is firmly committed to protecting the freedom of the press and of speech, and maintaining an environment in which a free and active press can operate under minimum regulation. Article 27 of the Basic Law stipulates that Hong Kong residents shall have freedom of speech, of the press and of publication.

7. In addition to clear principles and guidelines, the Police have implemented various measures and allocated resources to facilitate media reporting in policing work. These include improving the designation of press areas, deploying Media Liaison Teams to major public order events when necessary, and providing trainings on media relations and media facilitation to officers of all ranks. Moreover, the Police continue to maintain communication with media organisations and journalists' associations to listen to their views, and work in partnership with the media as far as possible on the basis of mutual understanding and accommodation. The Police fully understand the importance of complementing the reporting work of the media and maintaining effective communication with them, and thus have held meetings, visits and sharing sessions on a number of occasions to exchange views with journalists' associations and front-line reporters on the information dissemination mechanism as well as how to enhance the efficiency of information dissemination with the use of information technology, etc. To

improve the information dissemination of unforeseen incidents, the Police have further optimised their measures to increase the number of incidents released and to disseminate more basic information on such incidents. Since the implementation of these measures, the incidents released by the Police have significantly increased to a daily average of about 350 in 2013. To further enhance their efficiency on this front, the Police are working on an interactive platform for disseminating information of unforeseen incidents, and relevant research and development work has commenced in a progressive manner.

8. The Fire Services Department (“FSD”) has been maintaining communication with media organisations on matters related to the dissemination of information of incidents. Having considered their views, FSD has adopted improvement measures in respect of the dissemination time, format and types of incidents disseminated. For example, in addition to that of cases of fire, special services (e.g. gas leakage, persons being trapped inside lift, etc.) and those involving multiple casualties or patients, FSD has started to disseminate information on cases of bodily injuries happening in public places or those related to industrial accidents to the media from late April 2013. The daily average of emergency cases released has therefore increased from about 190 cases to about 280 cases. FSD will continue to communicate and exchange views with the media with a view to perfecting the information dissemination mechanism.

## **Conclusion**

9. Freedom of the press and freedom of speech are Hong Kong’s core values. The HKSAR Government is firmly committed to protecting the freedom of information, of the press and of the Internet. Article 27 of the Basic Law stipulates that Hong Kong residents shall have freedom of speech, of the press and of publication. Hong Kong has always had a free flow of information, a diversity of channels and flourishing media. The public have

access to all kinds of information, political views and comments every day. A wealth of information and freedom of the press are important factors of our success. Like all citizens, the HKSAR Government attaches great importance to and cherishes the freedom of information, of the press and of the Internet we enjoy, and will continue to make efforts to maintain our advantages.

Constitutional and Mainland Affairs Bureau

August 2013